United Nations S/2015/368

Security Council

Distr.: General
22 May 2015

Original: English

Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014)

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present, fifteenth, report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), paragraph 10 of Council resolution 2165 (2014) and paragraph 5 of Council resolution 2191 (2014), in which the Council requested me to report, every 30 days, on the implementation of those resolutions by all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. The information contained herein is based on the data available to United Nations agencies on the ground and reports from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and from open sources. Data from United Nations agencies on their humanitarian deliveries are reported for the period 1 to 30 April 2015. More recent data have been included, when available.

II. Major developments

A. Political/military

3. Widespread conflict and high levels of violence continued throughout the Syrian Arab Republic in April. Indiscriminate aerial bombardment, including the use of barrel bombs, by government forces and indiscriminate shelling by non-State armed groups and extremist and listed terrorist groups[1] continued, resulting in the death, injury and displacement of civilians, as well as destruction of property and infrastructure. Parties to the conflict continued to disregard their obligations under international humanitarian law and for the protection of civilians.

4. Fighting between government forces, non-State armed groups and listed terrorist groups in the north of the country continued to result in the death and injury of civilians. In Idlib Governorate, the fighting continued to escalate during the reporting period. Government forces continued with intense shelling and aerial

[1] On 30 May 2013, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the Nusra Front were designated as terrorist groups by the Security Council under resolution 1267 (1999). The two groups operate in the Syrian Arab Republic.

15-07960 (E) 220515

Please recycle

bombings, including the use of barrel bombs, on areas under the control of non-State armed groups. For example, on 13 April, three civilians were killed when government missiles hit the centre of Idlib city. On 14 April, nine civilians were killed when government forces fired two missiles at a market in the city. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent offices in the Carlton Hotel in Idlib city were hit by an air strike on 17 April, destroying ambulances and vehicles and curtailing the provision of first aid services in the city. Non-State armed groups continued to fire on the two largely Shia majority villages of Al Foh'a and Kafraya, where an estimated 20,000 people live.

5. Fighting between the parties also moved south-west from Idlib city towards the Sahel al-Ghab valley in north-west Hama Governorate. The fighting reportedly resulted in civilian casualties and affected access routes for humanitarian organizations in the governorate. On 25 April, Jaish al-Fateh seized control over Jisr al-Shoughour in rural Idlib, cutting the main supply routes to and from Latakia Governorate. Following the takeover of Jisr al-Shoughour, government and pro-government forces withdrew to positions south and east and carried out heavy shelling and aerial attacks on the town as well as other areas in rural Idlib, including Binnish, Darkoush, Kafr Nubl and Ma'arrat Al-Numan. For example, on 26 April, an aerial bombardment of the central market in Darkoush reportedly killed between 40 and 50 people and wounded more than 100 civilians.

6. There were reports of an alleged chlorine attack in Saraqib, Idlib, on 2 May. Further alleged chlorine attacks were reported in Janoudieh, Kansafrah and Kafr Batiekh on 7 May.

7. In Aleppo Governorate, indiscriminate attacks by government forces and non-State armed groups in Aleppo city continued to cause civilian deaths, destruction of property and interruption to essential services. Sources of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported that at least 100 civilians, including 22 children, were killed during the second half of April as a result of attacks by government forces on areas of Aleppo city held by non-State armed groups. On 14 April, an air strike on the Jamil Qabani School in the Ansari neighbourhood reportedly led to more than a dozen civilian casualties. On 3 May, local education authorities declared a suspension of all education activities in eastern Aleppo following an attack on an education centre in Saif Al Dawla. In terms of destruction to property, an analysis of Aleppo city carried out by the Operational Satellite Applications Programme of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR-UNOSAT), using satellite imagery collected on 26 April, indicated more than 40 structures destroyed or heavily damaged. That was probably caused by air strikes or barrel bombing between 15 December 2014 and 26 April 2015 in the Handarat, Rasafeh and Balayramun neighbourhoods.

8. Non-State armed groups launched several attacks inside Aleppo city, including on government-controlled residential neighbourhoods, reportedly resulting in around 100 civilian deaths in April and early May, as well as many more injured and substantial damage to residential buildings. For example, at least 14 civilians were reportedly killed and 60 injured when non-State armed groups attacked the Midan area with indiscriminate mortar shelling and improvised explosive devices made of gas cylinders. OHCHR representatives spoke to residents who described the difficulty of living under sustained attack from mortar shells, with schools in the areas being shut down. While continuing to maintain a presence and operations in

Aleppo city, United Nations organizations have temporarily suspended all non-critical missions to and from the city in response to the significant escalation in armed conflict there and the increased insecurity along the Salamya-Aleppo road.

9. During the reporting period, the Kurdish People's Protection Units and the Free Syrian Army continued joint advances in areas in Aleppo Governorate under the control of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), reportedly taking over Dafiye, Arne, Qerat and some hills overlooking Serrin, to the south of Kobane/Ayn al-Arab.

10. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, on 1 May, some 64 people were reportedly killed in Ber Mahli, to the north-east of Aleppo city, in air strikes carried out by the international anti-ISIL coalition.

11. Heavy fighting continued in and around Damascus in April, with non-State armed groups carrying out several mortar attacks, resulting in civilian casualties and damage to civilian property. For example, on 21 April, several mortar attacks on the Abbasiyeen and Adawi neighbourhoods killed a child and injured five civilians. One of the mortars reportedly hit the playground of the Martyr Issam Saffiya primary school in al-Adawi. Also on 6 April, two other mortars hit close to a medical centre in al-Adawi, injuring a civilian. On 22 April, non-State armed groups attacked the neighbourhood of al-Tadamoun in Damascus city with several mortars, resulting in the death of a woman.

12. Clashes between government forces, non-State armed groups and listed terrorist groups continued in the vicinity of the Al Zabadani, Jobar and Al Qaboun areas of Damascus. On 16 April, the Free Syrian Army and Jaish Al-Islam coordinated an attack against ISIL affiliates in the Barzeh, Al-Qaboun and Tishreen neighbourhoods in Damascus, reportedly resulting in many deaths and injuries. On 21 April, non-State armed groups in Jobar, east of Damascus city, along with the Nusra Front, declared the beginning of the battle to liberate Jobar, with fighting subsequently reported in Al-Tebah neighbourhood.

13. Following the infiltration of Yarmouk camp in Damascus by ISIL early in April, the situation in the camp deteriorated significantly, putting the lives of 18,000 people, including 3,500 children, at increased risk. The escalation of violence continued inside and around the camp almost daily. On 28 April and 1 May, government forces reportedly carried out air and missile attacks on the camp. Local sources claimed that at least 12 civilians were killed as a result of those strikes. Before the attacks, a UNITAR-UNOSAT analysis of satellite imagery showed one destroyed and two severely damaged buildings within Yarmouk camp, possibly caused by air strikes or barrel bombing between 5 and 17 April 2015, and two severely damaged buildings and three impact craters in the adjacent Falesteen camp area. While no precise, verifiable figures are available, it is estimated that thousands of civilians remain inside Yarmouk and thousands have fled Yarmouk to neighbouring communities. The continued absence of protection and the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Yarmouk remain extremely worrying.

14. Fighting also continued in rural Damascus during the reporting period, with government forces carrying out multiple attacks on eastern Ghouta. For example, on 15 April, government forces carried out several attacks on Zibdin village, including the use of at least 100 improvised gas cylinders filled with explosive materials, which killed 8 civilians and injured 50. On 22 April, government forces reportedly

carried out eight air strikes with guided missiles on a residential area in the town of Douma, killing six civilians, including two children. Also on 22 April, government forces carried out six air strikes on the town of Harasta, killing four civilians, including two women. On 6 May, a Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteer was killed when a Syrian Arab Red Crescent convoy was hit by mortars en route to deliver supplies to Douma; four others were injured. Additional civilian casualties were also reported.

15. In the Qalamoun area, the situation remains fluid following an intensification of fighting after government and pro-government forces launched an attack to retake the area from the Nusra Front early in May. Some media reported on the advance of pro-government forces, backed by Hizbullah, who took control of Assal Al-Ward and Joroud Al-Jiba. Opposition sources denied that the advance had taken place and claimed the killing of more than a dozen Hizbullah fighters, including high-ranking field commanders. Fighting also took place between the Nusra Front and ISIL in al-Qalamoun.

16. In Hasakeh Governorate, fighting between government forces and ISIL resulted in civilian deaths and injuries. Following a multi-pronged attack by ISIL on three government checkpoints on the outskirts of Al-Hasakeh city, government forces reportedly carried out aerial bombardments of ISIL strongholds in the province. On 15 April, at least 10 civilians were reportedly killed and dozens of others injured as a result of the aerial bombardment by government forces of the ISIL-controlled city of al-Shaddadi in rural Al-Hasakeh. According to human rights defenders from the area, the attack hit a hospital and a busy local market in the centre of the city.

17. Fighting also continued between government forces and ISIL in Deir ez-Zor Governorate in April. Reports indicate that ISIL launched a new offensive to take the remaining areas of Deir ez-Zor city, attacking the eastern perimeter of the city and the government military airbase. Government forces carried out shelling and aerial bombardments against ISIL-held areas, including Deir ez-Zor city and al-Mayadin. For example, according to OHCHR sources, on 23 April, 10 civilians were reportedly injured in al-Mayadin as a result of an aerial bombardment.

18. ISIL continued to launch attacks during the reporting period. For example, in Homs on 15 April, ISIL attacked government positions in the vicinity of the oil fields in Shaer and Jazal in rural Palmyra. Government forces reportedly regained control of part of the oil wells in the Jazal area, while ISIL reportedly maintained control over part of the Shaer oil field.

19. In the Waer neighbourhood of Homs city, there were reports of increased sniper activity resulting in the death and injury of civilians. Three civilians were reportedly killed by government snipers on 28 April, while two civilians were reportedly seriously wounded by sniper fire coming from the same location on 27 April. Government forces also continued to shell the neighbourhood; on 25 April, aerial bombardment by government helicopters reportedly resulted in the death of a woman and her child.

20. Heavy clashes between the Government and non-State armed groups continued in the southern part of the country. In Dar'a Governorate, government forces conducted aerial attacks on civilian-populated towns and villages, including with barrel bombs. On 14 April, government helicopters reportedly dropped barrel bombs

on the village of Eastern Karak, killing three children. Further government aerial attacks on eastern Karak and on Dael killed 14 people on 19 April. The Nasib border crossing continued to be closed as at 2 April. During the reporting period, a delegation of tribal leaders and businesspeople worked with the Government and non-State armed groups to reach an agreement to open it. A meeting between representatives of the opposition and tribal leaders was held in the United Arab Emirates in the final week of April.

21. On 1 May, two peacekeepers from the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force sustained minor injuries owing to shrapnel from an airburst and on 4 May three explosions hit Camp Ziouani, seriously wounding two more peacekeepers.

22. Civilian infrastructure continued to be affected during the reporting period. For example, 228,000 people living in the besieged neighbourhoods of Deir ez-Zor city continued to be without electricity following deactivation by ISIL of the Tayem power plant in late March. On 22 April, reportedly after three months of water cuts, the Government resumed pumping water into the Assali suburb in southern Damascus, where some 5,000 people live.

23. Thousands of people continued to be displaced by fighting and insecurity during the reporting period. In Idlib, further displacement to surrounding rural areas and the neighbouring governorates was reported, including 4,000 people to Al-Suqylibiah in Hama following the fighting in Jisr Al-Shoughour. In Al-Hasakeh, some 20,000 people were displaced from Tal Hmis and Ras Al Ain to various parts of Raqqa Governorate. In Dar'a, nearly 4,000 people were displaced again as a result of armed clashes, while 5,000 people fled from As-Salamiyeh in Hama as a result of an ISIL attack; most have since returned after government forces regained control of the village.

24. On 5 May, my Special Envoy launched the Geneva Consultations — a series of separate bilateral discussions between the Special Envoy and a broad spectrum of Syrian parties, as well as regional and international actors. The consultations are aimed at exploring ways to operationalize the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012. They are expected to last initially for five to six weeks, after which the Special Envoy will report to me as to where relevant parties stand vis-à-vis proposals to end the Syrian conflict through a political solution.

B. Human rights

25. During the reporting period, OHCHR continued to receive allegations and document cases of arbitrary detention, torture and death of persons in government detention centres run by the Syrian security forces in Damascus and Homs. Allegations were received of ill-treatment and torture in Al-Khatib State Security Branch (Damascus), Harasta Air Force Intelligence complex (Damascus) and Air Force Intelligence Branch (Homs). On 18 April, Syrian security forces reportedly raided the offices of the Syrian National Youth Party (a pro-government party), physically assaulted its Secretary-General and allegedly arrested a female member. Her whereabouts remain unknown. OHCHR sources reported that, on 21 April, government security forces carried out arrests in the Rukn el Din area in Damascus, arbitrarily arresting several young men in their homes. Their whereabouts remain unknown.

26. On 10 April, ISIL reportedly kidnapped around 50 civilians from Sunni and Ismaili communities after attacking the village of al-Mabouga. The kidnapped civilians were taken into areas controlled by ISIL further east of Hama.

27. Syrian cultural heritage sites continued to be destroyed and damaged owing to fighting, as well as looting and illegal excavations. On 5 April, the Virgin Mary Church in Tell Nasiri was destroyed. Human rights defenders from the area blamed ISIL, which has been in control of the village since February 2014. On 29 April, the Forty Martyrs Armenian Orthodox Church in Aleppo was destroyed and at least six other cultural heritage sites, including the ancient Noréas waterwheels in Hama, were also damaged during the reporting period.

C. Humanitarian access

28. Some 12.2 million people remain in need of humanitarian assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic, including more than 5 million children. About 7.6 million people are internally displaced, and nearly 4 million people have fled to neighbouring countries and North Africa.

29. The continued efforts of United Nations agencies and partners notwithstanding, the delivery of humanitarian assistance remained challenging during the reporting period. As in previous months, a combination of factors continued to impede access to some areas, including insecurity and shifting conflict lines, deliberate interference by the parties, restrictions on access and onerous administrative procedures that constrained the timely delivery of assistance.

30. In April, insecurity and shifting conflict lines, along with interference with operations, continued to constrain the delivery of assistance to several governorates in areas controlled by ISIL. For the eleventh month in a row, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was unable to send water treatment supplies to Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa Governorates, owing to the difficulty of delivering humanitarian supplies through areas controlled by ISIL. In addition, the World Food Programme (WFP) continued its suspension of food deliveries to ISIL-controlled areas. That affected some 600,000 people in Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor Governorates. Elsewhere, active fighting in Idlib Governorate halted the implementation of the measles vaccination campaign in April.

31. The closure of the Nasib border crossing with Jordan, following its takeover by non-State armed groups early in April, disrupted humanitarian deliveries into the southern part of the country. For example, UNICEF had been delivering on average 500,000 litres of water treatment material through the crossing on a monthly basis. United Nations agencies are making alternative arrangements to ship assistance into the Syrian Arab Republic, including the use of Latakia port and other border crossings. The closure of the Nasib border crossing has also affected the quantity of commercial goods, including basic staples, coming into the country.

32. No major changes in the administrative procedures required by the Government were reported in April. The administrative procedures currently in place continued to delay or limit the delivery of assistance by United Nations agencies in April.

33. A total of 387 visa applications (requests for new visas or visa renewals) for United Nations staff were submitted between 1 January and 30 April 2015. Of those,

286 visas have been approved (74 per cent) and 27 requests have been rejected. That compares to 28 requests for visas rejected in 2014. As at 30 April, 74 visa requests remained pending: 37 within the limit of 15 working days and 37 exceeding the limit.

34. In April, an international non-governmental organization informed the Government of its intention to withdraw from the country. As at 30 April, 15 international non-governmental organizations had been approved by the Government to work in the Syrian Arab Republic. International non-governmental organizations continued to face administrative hurdles and restrictions that had an impact on their ability to operate. For example, they remain restricted in their ability to partner with national humanitarian organizations, open sub-offices, conduct missions, join inter-agency convoys and undertake independent needs assessments. However, five visas were approved for staff members of international non-governmental organizations in April, including two submitted during the reporting period. Four visas remain pending.

35. During the reporting period, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested the United Nations to stop working with three national non-governmental organizations in Idlib, owing to the security situation there. Two of those organizations are still authorized to operate in other governorates. One new national non-governmental organization, working in Lattakia Governorate, was added to the list of national non-governmental organizations authorized to partner with United Nations agencies. As at 30 April, 117 national non-governmental organizations had been authorized to partner with the United Nations through 172 branches. Authorized national non-governmental organizations continue to operate under complex procedures to enable them to partner with United Nations agencies.

36. The level of funding for humanitarian activities continued to be outpaced by the scale of needs. The Strategic Response Plan for 2015 was 17 per cent funded as at 10 May.

37. Access challenges continued to make the delivery of assistance extremely difficult. The difficulty of delivering assistance to the 4.8 million people in hard-to-reach areas is particularly concerning. United Nations agencies and their partners reached 277,550 people with food in hard-to-reach locations; 49,880 with core relief items; approximately 410,000 with health supplies; more than 530,000 with water, sanitation and hygiene supplies; and nearly 50,000 with education supplies.

38. Two inter-agency cross-line convoys to hard-to-reach locations took place in April and one in May. On 14 and 21 April, the second and third phases of the inter-agency convoy to Rastan, Homs, were completed, delivering aid to some 81,000 people. Despite having obtained the approval of the local authorities, medical equipment and supplies were removed from both convoys by local security forces. On 28 April, an inter-agency convoy reached Yalda, Babila and Beit Sahm to respond to the influx of people temporarily displaced from Yarmouk, as well as vulnerable host communities. Humanitarian assistance sufficient for more than 110,000 people was delivered through the convoy. On 13 May, an inter-agency convoy, organized through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, delivered multisectoral assistance to 50,000 people and health supplies for almost 140,000 people to Big Orem in Aleppo Governorate.

39. Between 15 December 2014 and 14 May 2015, the United Nations requested permission to run 44 inter-agency convoys. Of those, 5 have been completed (to Al Waer; Talbiseh; Ar Rastan; Yalda, Babila and Beit Sahm; and Big Orem), assisting more than 290,000 individuals. The Government has approved in principle 14 additional convoys. The United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent are currently making plans to reach the approved locations. Five requests have been put on hold by the United Nations, given current security conditions. There was no response to six requests, which were resubmitted as new requests after three months. Fourteen requests await approval.

40. The challenging operating environment notwithstanding, the United Nations and its partners continued to reach millions of people in need in April from within the country and across borders pursuant to resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). WFP delivered food assistance for more than 4 million people in 12 of the 14 governorates. The World Health Organization (WHO) distributed medicines and supplies for 3.3 million treatments in 10 governorates. UNICEF provided multisectoral assistance for more than 1.6 million people in 10 governorates. In addition, deliveries of chlorine provided some 15.6 million with access to safe water. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reached some 285,000 people with core relief items and protection services in 11 governorates. The International Organization for Migration reached more than 230,000 people with multisectoral assistance in 9 governorates. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) supported 27,966 people with agricultural support in 3 governorates. The United Nations Population Fund supported its partners to deliver reproductive health services and services related to gender-based violence to 107,540 women in 9 governorates. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) continues to provide support to 480,000 Palestine refugees on a monthly basis. This is not enough, however, given that millions of people remain without any help or support.

41. Cross-border deliveries continued under the terms of resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). As at 10 May, the United Nations and its partners had sent 117 shipments — 77 from Turkey and 40 from Jordan — to the Syrian Arab Republic. Those shipments included food assistance for almost 2.4 million people; non-food items for around 1.3 million people; medical supplies and treatments for nearly 1.3 million people; and water and sanitation supplies for 847,000 people. In line with resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014), the United Nations notified the Government in advance of each shipment, including providing details of their contents, the destination district and the number of beneficiaries.

42. The United Nations monitoring mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic continued its operations in Jordan and Turkey. In April, it monitored 15 United Nations humanitarian shipments, confirming the humanitarian nature of each. The mechanism continued to benefit from excellent cooperation with the Governments of Jordan and Turkey. Operations in Iraq remain pending, owing to continued insecurity.

43. United Nations agencies continued to use the Nusaybin/Qamishly crossing with the consent of the Governments of Turkey and the Syrian Arab Republic. WFP completed the transportation of 46,000 food rations, sufficient for 230,000 people, through that corridor in April. However, delays in obtaining facilitation letters from

the relevant authorities significantly slowed down operations in the governorate. As a result, only 12,000 food rations for 60,000 people, or 26 per cent of the planned assistance, could be delivered to partners for distribution. UNICEF also completed the transportation of supplies across the border in April, including 330,000 litres of water, midwifery kits and sanitation and hygiene kits. Distribution of the assistance has commenced, including to those recently displaced in Hasakeh Governorate.

44. Both international and Syrian non-governmental organizations continued to deliver multisectoral assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic in April, including through the provision of ongoing services. Non-governmental organizations reached some 1 million people during the month, including providing aid to some 450,000 people in Aleppo, nearly 150,000 in Idlib, some 110,000 in Quneitra and more than 50,000 people in Dar'a Governorate. The ability of non-governmental organizations to operate in parts of the north of the country was hampered by the escalation of the conflict in the Idlib and Aleppo Governorates.

45. On 17 April, WFP and the Government signed an agreement to conduct a household food security survey that would enable the food security sector to plan and sustain operations more effectively in the Syrian Arab Republic. On 23 April, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs approved an education needs assessment, the key findings of which will provide evidence of the needs in the education sector. Training the enumerators for the education survey has begun. It is hoped that the agreements in two key sectors will pave the way for similar agreements in other areas and provide the building blocks on which initiatives for strengthening resilience can be developed for Syrian communities.

Besieged areas

46. Of the 4.8 million people in hard-to-reach areas, some 422,000 remained besieged in the Syrian Arab Republic. They included 167,500 people besieged by government forces in eastern Ghouta and Darayya, Rural Damascus; 26,500 people besieged by non-State armed groups in Nubul and Zahra; and 228,000 people besieged by ISIL in the government-controlled western neighbourhoods of Deir ez-Zor city. Early in April, Yarmouk experienced an escalation of violence, infiltration by ISIL and the subsequent flight of several thousand Palestine refugees and Syrians to adjacent communities to the south-east of the camp. With the facilitation of the Syrian authorities and local community leaders and despite an environment of high risk, United Nations agencies and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent provided humanitarian assistance to the displaced and their host communities. While no precise, verifiable figures are available, it is estimated that thousands of civilians remain inside Yarmouk. No humanitarian access has been granted directly to the remaining civilians inside Yarmouk, whose condition remains critical.

47. The parties to the conflict continued to restrict access to besieged areas in April, with no United Nations assistance reaching any besieged area during the month.

48. In eastern Ghouta, some 163,500 people remain besieged by government forces. No United Nations assistance reached besieged locations in eastern Ghouta in April. However, on 6 May, WHO contributed medical assistance sufficient for 2,000 people, including two dialysis machines and renal failure medicines, to a Syrian Arab Red Crescent convoy to Douma. WHO had requested permission to

send 2,000 renal failure medicines with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent convoy; however, permission was granted for only 250. The convoy was hit by a mortar in Douma, resulting in the death of a Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteer and injury to three others.

49. In Darayya, about 4,000 people remain besieged by government forces. No United Nations assistance reached Darayya in April. People in the area have not been assisted by the United Nations since October 2012.

50. In Nubul and Zahra, about 26,500 people remain besieged by non-State armed groups. No United Nations assistance reached the two areas in April. United Nations agencies have not been able to deliver humanitarian assistance to the villages since 8 May 2014.

51. In the government-controlled western neighbourhoods of Deir ez-Zor city, some 228,000 people are besieged by ISIL. No United Nations assistance reached the area in April. People in Deir ez-Zor city were last reached by the United Nations in March 2015, when FAO delivered 140 sheep. As at 8 May, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the International Committee of the Red Cross had airlifted 106 tons of food assistance and 15 tons of medical aid into the besieged parts of Deir ez-Zor city. Meanwhile, the United Nations team is making arrangements to conduct emergency airlifts to the besieged government-held districts of the city. The airlifts will be conducted from Damascus using commercial air freight. The Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator is currently awaiting approval from the Government.

Free passage of medical supplies, personnel and equipment

52. In April, WHO and its implementing partners dispatched medicines and medical supplies from within the Syrian Arab Republic for nearly 3.3 million medical treatments[2] to local health authorities, non-governmental organizations and private medical facilities in 10 governorates. Of the total, some 400,000 treatments were delivered in hard-to-reach locations and via cross-line deliveries in the Aleppo, Dar'a, Deir ez-Zor, Homs and Rural Damascus Governorates. That included some 1,000 medical treatments delivered by a local partner to areas in Deir ez-Zor city controlled by ISIL. Early in May, following approval by the Government, WHO contributed medical assistance sufficient for some 2,000 people, including two dialysis machines and renal failure medicines, to a Syrian Arab Red Crescent convoy to Douma in eastern Ghouta.

53. Access to medical supplies and equipment continued to be restricted by insecurity and constraints imposed on humanitarian operations by parties to the conflict. For example, in April and despite obtaining approval from the local authorities, all injectable medicines, surgical supplies and medical kits were removed from a United Nations inter-agency convoy to Ar-Rastan in Homs by the security forces. Consequently, people were deprived of 10,459 treatments. In addition, approval from local security was not obtained to send three surgical kits and intravenous fluids to eastern Aleppo city, depriving 33,115 people of medical treatments. WHO has supplies in warehouses in Aleppo ready to be delivered to Nubul and Zahra, but continued fighting has prevented access.

[2] One standard treatment course is considered to be a treatment for one person. Treatment courses are determined for each medicine distribution on the basis of international WHO standards.

54. In terms of requests to deliver to hard-to-reach locations, as at the end of April, WHO had 10 pending requests to deliver assistance in the Dar'a, Deir ez-Zor, Aleppo and Damascus Governorates since the beginning of 2015, including 4 made in April.

55. The first nationwide measles immunization campaign in 2015 was conducted between 19 and 30 April with support from UNICEF and WHO. Preliminary results show that the campaign reached more than 1.5 million children in 11 governorates out of a targeted 2.6 million children. In Raqqa and large parts of Deir ez-Zor, ISIL did not permit the campaign to be conducted, except for the vaccination of 1,000 children on 29 April in Raqqa through local partners. Active fighting in Idlib halted the implementation of measles vaccination in that governorate. Elsewhere, some children located in areas of active fighting or under siege in the Hasakeh, Homs, Aleppo and Rural Damascus Governorates could not be reached. The final results of the campaign will be announced in the second week of May.

56. Attacks on medical facilities, ambulances and medical personnel continued during the reporting period. In April, Physicians for Human Rights documented 14 attacks on medical facilities, all by government forces. Five of the attacks occurred in Idlib, four in Aleppo, two in Damascus and one each in the Deir ez-Zor, Hama and Hasakeh Governorates. Seven attacks were with barrel bombs, six with missiles and rockets and one with mortar fire. Physicians for Human Rights also documented the deaths of seven medical personnel in April, three of whom were targeted. All seven were killed by government forces. Five died from shelling and bombing, and two were shot. Three of those deaths occurred in Rural Damascus, two in Aleppo, and one each in Damascus and Dar'a Governorates.

Safety and security of staff and premises

57. On 10 May, two projectiles landed close to a Syrian Arab Red Crescent warehouse in Jisr Al-Haj, Aleppo, causing minor physical damage.

58. On 6 May, one Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteer was killed when a Syrian Arab Red Crescent convoy was hit by a mortar in Douma, Rural Damascus.

59. On 17 April, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent offices in the Carlton Hotel in Idlib city were hit by an air strike. No casualties were reported, but ambulances and vehicles were destroyed. As a result of the damage, the capacity of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent-Idlib to provide first aid services and deliver humanitarian assistance was severely curtailed.

60. On 11 April, UNHCR received information about the detention of one of its local staff in Homs, who had been on the way to Al Waer to retrieve household items. UNHCR immediately communicated the incident to the Governor of Homs and the staff member was subsequently released.

61. A total of 32 United Nations staff members, 26 of whom are UNRWA staff, continue to be detained or are missing. The total number of humanitarian workers killed in the conflict since March 2011 is 76. That includes 17 staff members of the United Nations, 45 Syrian Arab Red Crescent staff members and volunteers, 8 volunteers and staff members of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society and 6 staff members of international non-governmental organizations. Of the 76, 9 have been killed since 1 January 2015.

III. Observations

62. Parties to the conflict continue to behave with impunity and total disregard for the basic tenets of humanity and international humanitarian law. Thousands of innocent people have been killed, injured or displaced in civilian areas and neighbourhoods. Housing, essential services and vital infrastructure have been destroyed or rendered unusable. It is difficult to believe that those who drop barrel bombs or launch mortar rounds and artillery shells do not realize the immense harm and suffering that their actions are causing to civilians. The deliberate targeting of civilians is a war crime and those responsible must be held accountable.

63. The number of attacks on medical facilities in April was the highest monthly total on record in my monthly reports since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014). Attacks on such facilities have a multiplier effect, not only killing and injuring, but also leaving many people unable to get the treatment that they need. The cumulative impact on the Syrian people and on the health-care system has been devastating, with many Syrians unable to obtain the most basic levels of care. The protection and provision of medical assistance and health care to the wounded and sick in all circumstances is at the heart of humanitarian action and clearly enshrined in international humanitarian law.

64. Lack of, and restrictions on, access remain a major concern. The valiant efforts of humanitarian organizations to continue to assist people in need notwithstanding, millions of people are still left with no or insufficient assistance, in particular those living under siege in intolerable conditions. The lack of access is the consequence not only of continuing insecurity and fighting, but also of active obstruction by the parties to the conflict, in particular the Government, of the work of humanitarian organizations. I emphasize once again that the arbitrary withholding of consent to relief operations is a violation of international humanitarian law.

65. The level of carnage and devastation throughout the Syrian Arab Republic should shock the collective conscience of the world. The Syrian people are losing hope. They cannot afford to wait. A political solution must be found. The international community, and particularly the Security Council, must take action without delay to end the daily violations of international law and the killing of civilians.

66. I renew my call upon all those engaged in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic to show vision and leadership and come together to work to end the violence and engage in efforts to reach a sustainable political solution. The conflict will end with a political settlement, not with a military solution. The sooner that that is recognized by all those engaged in the conflict, the better it will be for the Syrian people and the more lives will be saved. As my Special Envoy has launched the Geneva Consultations, I urge all involved to engage positively in the process. I count on the wisdom and humanity of all Syrian, regional and international actors to take the steps necessary to resolve this conflict.